

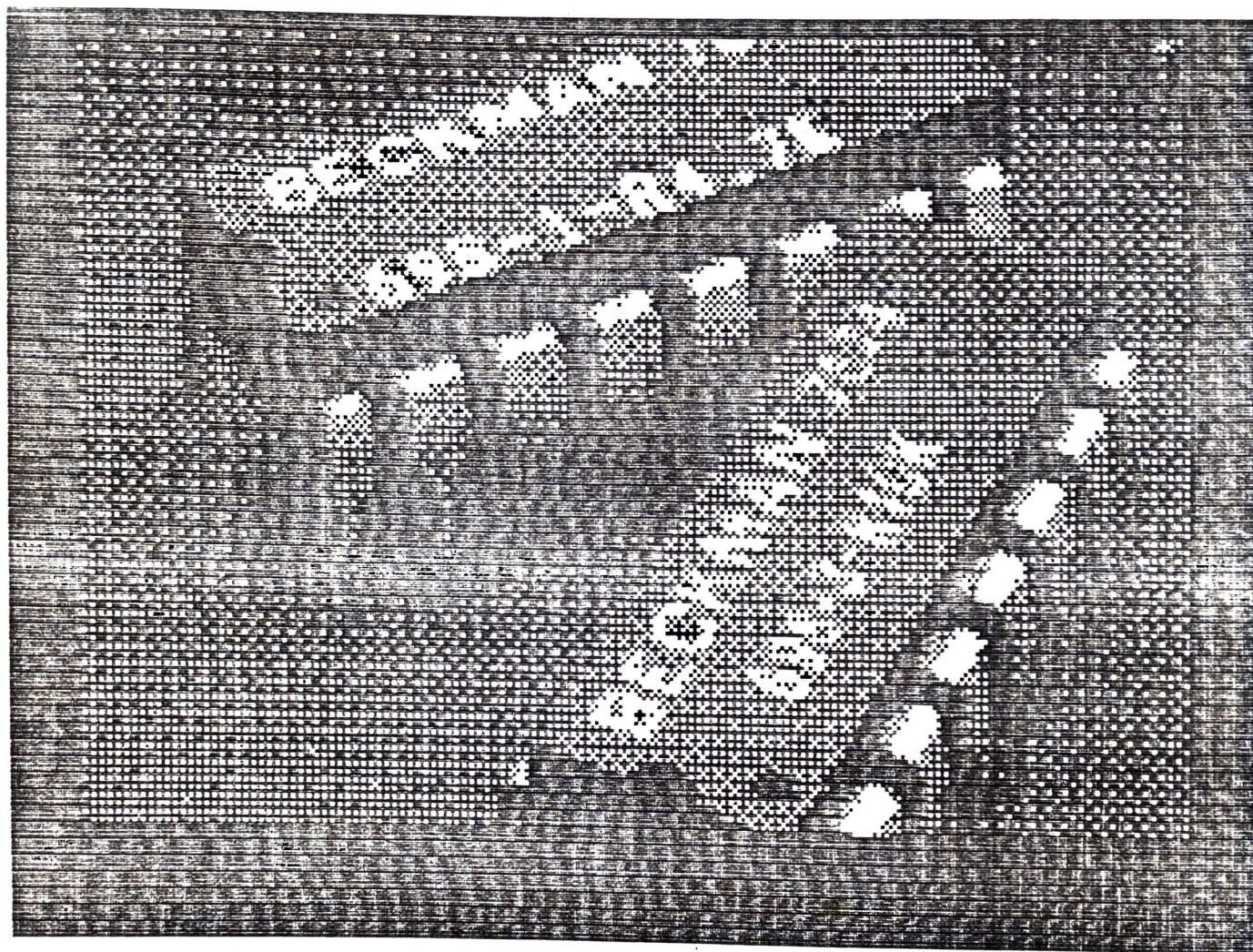
ABUG



ACORN & BBC
microcomputers
USER GROUP
Sheffield

please reply to:-

NEWSLETTER 19 : September 1984



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Diary

October 3rd	(Castle Inn)	Social
October 17th	(Park Baths)	Demonstration by Feedback Instruments
November 7th	(Castle Inn)	Social
November 21st	(Park Baths)	Talk by Jim McGregor
December 12th	(Parks Baths)	Demonstration by Steve White

Please note only one meeting in December

The demonstration of 'Bitstik' by Steve White given at the last meeting was quite comprehensive. Apart from the interesting graphics displayed, the system also gave an insight into the potential power and versatility of the second processors. The increase in operating speed was immediately impressive. Steve outlined other software planned by Acorn and his talk seemed to be appreciated by everyone and we are accepting his offer of a return visit in December.

Next month there is a demonstration from a company called Feedback which is based in the south. They produce a series of ingenious add-ons for the BBC aimed at the educational market which include the usual traffic light simulators but also some very interesting devices using stepper motors and digital logic.

In November we have a talk from Jim McGregor who is co-author with Alan Watt of a series of books for the BBC and Electron including 'Advanced Programming Techniques for the BBC micro' and 'The BBC Micro Book - Basic, Sound & Graphics'. We don't have an exact title for his talk, but he has another book due out in October (we hope he will have copies available on the night) and we anticipate that this will be the main theme.

As well as these more formal events, in either October or November we expect to have available an advanced release model of the robot plotter by Chessel Electronics which we mentioned a few months ago. As far as we know the software for this is fairly rudimentary at the moment so there is a possible commercial opportunity for an enterprising programmer.

Next month we will have articles on printers by J. Fryer and B. Watson (Olivetti Inkjet and Canon PW-1080A, respectively), and so this month we are concentrating on news items of software, hardware and books for the Beeb.

Library additions

Volume 3 software from Solidisk, comprising of-
 Macrobasic
 Libs/1
 VMP
 Solidisk program library

The Advanced Basic Rom User Guide by Colin Pharo
 Interfacing Projects for the BBC by Colin Opie
 Making Music on the BBC Micro

The new book on the BBC Basic ROM is the answer to many peoples' problems. It lists entry points for all the routines handled by the normal Basic commands and gives details for using these in machine code programs.

The quality of the software support offered by Solidisk seems to be up to all their claims, and the continuing development is available on a 'free' update service. As so

many members of the club have Solidisk RAM Boards, it is intended to maintain the current Solidisk software as a free service in the library.

Double Density Upgrade

Another product from Solidisk is a double density disc interface upgrade kit costing £40.95 (£50.95 for the second processor DFS version). This appears to be the cheapest upgrade on the market by at least £50.00, and has the considerable advantage that it will be compatible with Solidisk software, unlike all the other double density systems which are available. The other impressive claim is that they will replace their DFS to match any future standard for double density, free of charge. The only shortcoming of the DFS at the moment appears to be the limitation to 31 files, as Acorn's single density specification. We understand that they are working to improve this feature. We have a detailed information sheet, and anyone looking for a disc upgrade should certainly give this consideration. If anyone takes the plunge in the near future please give us a review.

Miscellaneous News Items

Several organisations have written to the club over the last few weeks and some of the information may be of general interest. The most important is a letter from Broadcasting Support Services. You may remember that last winter the BBC broadcast a radio programme about computers called 'Chip Shop' which transmitted free software over the air which could be translated to suit a range of computers by means of a special BASICODE package. The programme is restarting this month and a revised package is being released called BASICODE 2+. As a service to people who buy this package Broadcasting Support Services are providing a help and advice service on a local basis.

They are therefore looking for people who are prepared to give some spare time to responding to enquirers in this way. One of the computers covered is of course the BBC and if anyone is interested we have details of the application procedure. They are asking for a sound knowledge of the BBC plus familiarity with the BASICODE idea and constant access to a telephone. The remuneration is £5 per hour plus reimbursement of telephone expenses.

We have also had a letter from the Association of Computer Clubs (ACC) which we joined some time ago. This is still an emergent organisation but looks set to become established as a general clearing house of information for computer clubs. It publishes its own newsletter called ACCumulator which is kept in the library. There are two relevant items of news this month. Firstly they have established a ClubSpot data base on Prestel page 810 which we will report on next month. Secondly they are offering an insurance service for computers bought to user group meetings. The committee is considering this at the moment but we were not very impressed in the value for money aspect of the deal. If anyone feels strongly about this please make your views known and come and have a look at the prospectus.

The last letter was from Simnett Computers Ltd. offering membership of a purchasing group. The idea is that you join the club for a membership fee of £6 and then have access to discount prices from the club list. The club is based in Surrey which lessens its attraction and the example prices which we were given did not seem very favourable compared to other advertisers in the computer press. Nonetheless we will be pleased to pass on the information to anyone who is interested.

For Sale

This spot has proved to be quite popular with members, and has been very effective. If you have any items to sell (or exchange) then give us the details. Meanwhile the only items remaining for sale from last month are a few Sidewise Boards.